



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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God's Lavish, Lovely, Miraculous Pursuit of Me

by Donna

As an only child, I grew up sheltered from the world by traditional parents. I wasn't allowed to watch "R" rated movies, MTV or go to rock concerts. Every Sunday morning, I trudged alongside my mom to church all the while wishing to stay home like my dad to do whatever his heart desired. My mom was a children's Sunday School teacher, Girl Scout leader, and talented homemaker. Dad worked for the U.S. Government at various embassies and consulates located in the Middle East, Europe, and North America. We traveled as a family unit, making house for one to four year stints wherever the government assigned us to live. I attended English-speaking, international schools, as well as a Catholic girl's school.

Personality-wise, my parents couldn't have been more different. I volleyed between the two of them, manipulating each personality to suit my wants and desires, knowingly pitting them against one another at my leisure. I perceived my dad as the commanding, authoritative, controller of everything; my mom, the weak, passive, and without a will of her own wife. I feared my dad and wanted him to think I was perfect so that I'd get rewards. I pushed my mom to her limits, daring her to take a stand of authority over me, therefore leaving her exhausted from our fights. There were altogether good times, and I was a happy child more often than not. Yet, I functioned with perpetual loneliness, self-isolation and questioning of my role/part in a family script that I felt responsible to help develop. I always had a lot of friends that kept me busy, toys, and a solid school life. At a young age, I began to seek out comfort and pleasure in the world outside of my family's home.

I started acting out sexually with my male and female peers when I was four years old. I got caught by my preschool teacher who reported the incident to my mom when she came to pick me up that same afternoon. I don't recall my mom saying anything to me about the incident (perhaps she thought that the teacher handled it for her), however I do remember feeling deep shame for what I had done because of the teacher's scolding of me. I privately continued to act out sexually with peers throughout my childhood, sometimes getting caught by adults, sometimes not, yet always knowing that I was wrong for what I was doing.

Despite going to church every Sunday with my mom, I didn't have a personal relationship with God. I considered my dad to be the law of my little world, just as one of his favorite catch phrases went: "It's my way or the highway." My dad was a loving father, but just as imperfect as any human parent. My mom didn't talk with me about growing into a woman, and what that meant, and how change is natural and beautiful. I



*Donna completed
her journey
through TBG in
May of 2009.*

grew ashamed of my sexuality, and by the time I reached the cusp of womanhood, I wanted to hide in a little girl's body, clothes, games, and roles. By no means did I want to grow up, wear makeup, talk with boys on the phone, and go to school dances. I threw myself into unhealthy friendships with other young women in my school who were on the fringes of social framework, while all the while near-worshipping the popular girls who looked like they might have stepped out of the pages of *Seventeen* magazine. I started to feel different, and didn't know how to relate to other girls my age other than to dominate ones less popular or more vulnerable than me. I desired to be beautiful, thin, popular, have a boyfriend, and to care about what guys thought of me. However, instead, I was so deeply trapped inside of my own thoughts and feelings, lost beyond belief, that I couldn't even desire or fathom an escape from myself. I idolized the notion of traditional beauty, yet simultaneously claimed to be a feminist who hated the patriarchy. I was unknowingly self-loathing, destructive, and extremely bitter. Starting at the age of 16, I immersed myself in a subculture called Riot Grrrl, a punk rock feminist movement of the 1990s. From the exposure to lesbianism in the Riot Grrrl/feminist/punk communities I participated in, I came to the conclusion that I too was a lesbian. All of a sudden I felt as though I made sense to myself, and everything about me, validated. I communicated with "women and girls like me," and I couldn't get enough of these interactions. I built walls up to my family and old friends, and dove head first into the movement/subcultures, where I made new friendships. I tried to show my family and old friends who I was through the lenses of Riot Grrrl and lesbianism. Amazingly, my parents and old friends loved and supported me throughout this time, where I acted out in very self-indulgent ways. This period of my life lasted about twelve years, until I was about 28 years old.

The Lord finally made his way into my heart during the autumn and winter of 2006-07. The relief I felt after letting him in was amazing, and the feeling of freedom absolutely exhilarating. It was better than any drug, sex, lust or codependent relationship — in fact, those things seemed cheap and stupid in comparison to the love offered by Jesus. I felt like an addict set free but still not yet free from desire and patterns. I had a lot of stock built up in the past, plus a lot of memories, friends, and investments. However, miraculously, my lustful attractions to women, especially butch/boyish women, disappeared like a rainstorm quelled by the sun. Yet, the grief I felt as I mourned the passing of my old life, however undesirable it had become, was great and all-encompassing. The only relief I could feel was from God. So, I sought Him out by going to a Christian church, a Home

Community of the church body, taking classes in theology, and getting baptized. Simultaneously, my relationships with family and old friends started to heal as well, slowly but surely. As I invested in love, my life reaped the benefit of a full heart. Yet, I had a lot of loneliness to grapple with as I feared forming new relationships; baggage from my past weighed me down tremendously. That first year or so of knowing God was a gorgeous, tiresome, and soul-searching time for me.

So, I came to Portland Fellowship in hunger for the truth of who I am, really: a beloved daughter of God. I had so much to learn relationally and spiritually, and felt so blessed by the *Taking Back Ground* Program, though it was difficult for me to sit through at times. There were moments where I wanted to run away from it but to where? And that rhetorical question God answered, always keeping me glued to my seat even through tears, sweat and a palpating heart of grief over my old ways. I became more and more open to God and his children during my time at Portland Fellowship, and am still blessed by the ministry with developing, healthy friendships found there.

The Christian walk is a familiar yet completely foreign thing to me — being raised in churches but always feeling uncomfortable in them — makes for a slow-paced trail with lots of help from God through my mom, pastors, Christ-following friends and a mentor. Where I once turned away from and rebelled against God, now I turn toward Him and He fills my heart with goodness. I'm becoming a leader in the Kids Ministry at my church, and the love I can pour into the lives of kids, teaching them and relating to them, is beyond compare. My mom and I are now close on a real level. I feel as though I'm walking in her footsteps, and that my heart is filled with joy, love and grace. We are not only mother and daughter, but best friends. It's a new thing for me to respect my mom and dad genuinely, and not out of fear, but out of true love.

Luke 6:45 says: The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

Where my heart was once black and full of anger, it's now an open vessel to the Lord. I'm so excited to journey with Him to newer, brighter places, and know that no matter what happens, I will always be with Him and He with me. I'm excited to know Him better, serve Him better, listen and pray to Him, and never leave His sight.



Donna with TBG leader Suzanne at graduation.

embracing neediness - drew berryessa

What do you think of when you hear the word needy? I would be willing to bet that for most of us, this word has plenty of negative connotations. Already as I am pondering the word myself, several faces from the past come to mind. Maybe you are experiencing the same phenomenon: memories of the person that, when you see them coming from across the foyer at church, you look for the nearest escape route. Some of us have been the needy ones. I know that people have ducked into restrooms to



avoid conversations with me in the past, and looking back at my neediness at the time, I don't blame them! My point is that for the most part, neediness is not a desirable state, and being approached with the needs of another can be overwhelming. Even so, some of the most inspiring moments around us come when people in great need are met with the generosity of someone who is able to meet that need. Like I said earlier, most of us don't want to feel or be revealed to be needy. We would much rather present ourselves as self-sufficient and put together. Unfortunately, when we do that, we miss out on the joy of both God and others ministering to our need, and we rob others and God of the joy of meeting us at our point of need. Bottom line,

sometime we just have to embrace and admit our need. Portland Fellowship is in need, and we are asking you to help.

We need prayer support. A few newsletters ago we asked for people to consider joining our prayer intercessory team. The men and women on this team really have one powerful job: PRAY. They pray for our participants who are fighting to submit their lives to God. They pray for us on staff, that the Lord would protect us, sustain us, encourage us, and guide us. I hope you will join this part of our ministry that will bless you in return. Learn more about signing up on page 4.

We need financial support. It is not news to any of us that times are difficult financially. Although we have not specifically or explicitly addressed it in our newsletter up to this point, Portland Fellowship has felt the hit financially. The Lord is faithful in the lean times just as He is in times of abundance, and we are grateful for His faithfulness to this ministry. However, the need for our ministry continues to grow, and with that, our resources must grow to meet the demand. The bottom line here is that in order to do all that we feel God is asking and leading us to do, we need to grow our financial partnership. Please consider what gift you could give monthly to partner with the work of this ministry.

So, at the risk of being "needy", there it is. Please prayerfully consider how the Lord might be asking you how you can help meet to our need. We are so grateful for all of you who have already joined us in this journey through both prayer and financial support, and are grateful in advance for those who will respond and begin partnering with us in these ways. May God bless you.

lives transformed through mentoring - jim thompson

It feels like I'm climbing into a cockpit when I do this - when I start my ReachTruth mentoring. I sit at our computer desk with my notebook open to a photo of the person I am mentoring. I am surrounded by books - my Bible, a Spanish dictionary, several books I often quote, case notes, and - always - a cup of tea.

Most of our ReachTruth mentors take on one or maybe two men or women at a time. Because of my retirement and experience, I am blessed to have as many as ten men at a time. They have varied in ages from 26 to 56, and range across several continents. Within the past year I have been in conversation with mentorees in Botswana, Guatemala, South Korea, the island of Borneo, and numerous American states. Sometimes, the cross-cultural exchange is fascinating, sometimes hair-pulling. But always, we become fast friends and launch ourselves into life-changing dialogue.

The mentorees all express a deep appreciation for this resource. One young man had never before shared his struggle until he registered for the program. Another was badly hurt by a church experience. His healing journey took him back into the life of the church, and even to leadership in a men's group. One is a youth pastor who has hovered on the edge of committing a serious offense. Several have considered suicide. For all of them, ReachTruth has become a lifeline. And for me, a most amazing and unexpected blessing at this time in my life.

ReachTruth was created and is sustained by your giving to PF. Its possibilities are still being discovered, with over 400 participants and mentors having participated. Lives, marriages, and ministries are being restored. God is being glorified.

If you know someone in need of support and encouragement, please share www.reachtruth.com with them.



november / december calendar & services

november 3, 10, 17, 24
Taking Back Ground
Discipleship program for men
and women struggling with
unwanted same-sex attractions.

november 2
**pacific evangelical
school of ministry**
Jason will be speaking in
chapel to students.

november 7
**bridges youth conference
rolling hills community**
Drew will be presenting a work-
shop on ministering to youth
with same-sex attraction issues.

november 2
pacific university
Jason will be sharing a
redemptive message to a
liberal class on GLBT issues.

november 20 & december 18
family & friends group
Join us for guidance, prayer,
encouragement and support.
Meetings are held the third
Friday of each month at 7 pm.

december 1, 8
open group
All are welcome to join us for an
engaging discussion about same-
sex attraction and how that im-
pacts life and faith. A great place
to get to learn about the ministry
of Portland Fellowship. 7 pm

december 15
TBG Christmas Party
A wonderful casual night of fun
and games for TBG participants
and alumni. 6pm

Additional updates:
www.portlandfellowship.com
**Speakers, counseling
and youth support:** can
be arranged through the office.

connecting to you

Last month we announced briefly a new way for you to connect with Portland Fellowship. We want to remind you and ask that you take a moment to sign into your account, knowing that we really want to hear from you. Because you are getting this newsletter, you already have a confidential profile on our website. Go to the site and choose "Sign In". Please note: **You don't need to register for a new account. You already have one!**



Simply follow the instructions to get/recover your username and your password.

Important: If your email address is not in our system, you will be informed and will need to email or call us to update your record.

Your profile will allow you to update your information, see your giving history, sign up for programs, make a pledge online, and choose newsletter options. Also please upload a picture of yourself so we can have a visual of you! We also have a very short survey that we would like you to complete. This will give us a better idea how to serve you and others who come to Portland Fellowship.

www.portlandfellowship.com

prayer

...for our staff and ministry team as they lead with care, sensitivity, and wisdom. Please pray for their marriages and children as well.

...for all of our group participants who are involved in *Taking Back Ground*, Family and Friends, *Reach Truth*, counseling, mentoring and *Upper Room* Intern Community.

...for additional prayer support for those going through the *Taking Back Ground* program. Those with a relationship with PF for over a year are invited to sign up online for weekly prayers.



P O R T L A N D
f e l l o w s h i p

The Fellowship Message
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The Portland fellowship,
a ministry proclaiming freedom
from homosexuality through
the power of Jesus Christ

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